

COMMUNIST ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THE WEST

Theme of "Capitalist Intervention" a Scapgoat for Problems Created by Tensions Inherent in the Soviet System

A. Statement of the Soviet Item

Almost from the beginning of its existence the Soviet Union—and later its satellites—has used the charge of "capitalist intervention," or variants thereof, to explain away problems and maledjustments which arise out of the very nature of the Communist system. The psychological technique of "projection" has been used consciously by the Soviets time and again over the years to distract attention from their own shortcomings, whether these be agricultural failures, deviations from the political line, or inflexibilities of the socio-economic system. The Soviet theory of "capitalist encirclement" gives them a convenient scapegoat.

Such accusations date from the first decade of the Soviet Union. The trial of the Shukhty engineers in 1928, the first of the great economic purges, was the first of the "show trials" which featured extraordinary, self-abasing "confessions" by the accused, who were publicly tried for "counter-revolutionary sabotage in the coal industry and espionage for foreign powers." The Act of Accusation detailed a grand plot financed by foreign capital for sabotage of the nation's machinery, waste of fuel supplies, and destruction of the coal industry at the time of a projected war of intervention.^{1/} Such an accusation clearly was more palatable than admitting that the drive for industrialization had lagged behind schedule because of inefficiencies of the system.

The same accusation was employed in eliminating competition to the Bolshevik Party. In 1930, eight leaders of the Industrial Party were prosecuted in a trial which allegedly included some 2,000 members of the party. They were charged with "working closely over a period of years with the general staffs of a dozen foreign nations to undermine Soviet industry and prepare the ground for interventionist attacks."^{2/}

Use of the theme has been more selective in the post-World War II period. It has not been used widely in connection with events in the Soviet Union. Until the 20th party congress, the Soviet Union did not even admit the existence of certain civil disturbances and uprisings which were reported from time to time in free world newspapers, much less attempt to explain them. The only fairly recent use of the theme was the inclusion of charges of "support from imperialist forces abroad" and "assistance to foreign intelligence services" leveled at Lavrenti Beria.

Also, in recent years the Soviets have particularized the "encirclement" theme primarily against the United States as "the head of the imperialist camp." The constant reiteration of Western responsibility for civil demonstrations and political deviations has become so familiar as to be expected with each new purge or mass arrest. Although other free world nations—particularly the British—are accused from time to time, the indictment most frequently is leveled against the U.S.

The charge has been included, with a few notable exceptions, in almost all the purges which the satellites have undergone in the past decade. These purges, and the "show trials" which almost always accompanied them, usually were the result of intra-party dissensions and rivalry. Especially after the Tito "defection," they probably also resulted from a genuine fear on Stalin's part that other "People's Democracies" might follow in the Yugoslav footsteps. The real reason for the purges is beyond the purview of this paper; what is pertinent is that in most cases the charge of "capitalist" or "imperialist" intervention was included in the indictments of the purges.

The patent falsity of the charge is demonstrated in the recent rehabilitation of several of the Communist leaders against whom it was leveled. If, for example, Imre Rajk had indeed been "an agent of many foreign intelligence services," probably he would not have been posthumously restored to honor. Yet on 29 March 1955, then Party Secretary Matyas Rakosi admitted that Rajk's trial had been "based on provocation" and stated that on the basis of a resolution of June 1955 Rajk was being rehabilitated. The same kind of charges of connections with "imperialist agents" were found among the numerous vilifications against Tito at the time of his break with Moscow. Yet Tito too has been returned to a state of Communist grace.

B. Examples of Use of the Soviet Theme

1. Purges of Communist Leaders

a. Poland

The first of the satellite purges began in Poland in 1947, when Vice Premier Wladyslaw Gomulka and Vice Minister of National Defense M. Spychalski were dismissed from their governmental posts. They were later expelled from the party and in 1951 arrested on charges of "Titoist deviation." Subsequent charges against Gomulka included espionage and conspiring with the agents of "foreign imperialist powers." Gomulka was never brought to trial, and in 1956 was released from detention and partly rehabilitated. He was acquitted of charges of Titoism, but it was still insisted that his policies had been in error. 3/

b. Hungary

In September 1949, Hungary brought to trial László Rajk, former minister of interior, entering as evidence a long, rambling "confession" of "crimes against the Hungarian people." A dispatch from its Hungarian correspondent, on proceedings at the first day of Rajk's trial, was printed in Pravda on 17 September 1949:

Standing before the judges' bench is a man who speaks in a microphone with a monotonous and indifferent voice telling the story of the colossal betrayals and of the conceived and carried out murders. This man is László Rajk, a former minister in the Hungarian Republic and an agent of many foreign intelligence services. The entire life of this degenerate who has no right even to call himself a man forms a story of continuous betrayals....

Having begun his traitor's career as a Hungarian mercenary, László Rajk, finding himself in the camp of interned heroes of the Spanish International Brigade, becomes an agent of the French Intelligence Service. After the occupation of France, together with all the French agents, he is handed over to the Gestapo. After the defeat of Germany he is, as

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it were, inherited by the U.S. Intelligence service. The final act of the spying career of Rajk finds him transferred by the U.S. intelligence service, in the persons of Lt. Col. Kovach and Martin Mindler, together with his other Hungarian agents, into its Yugoslav branch....

The most significant thing emerging from the forced confession of this knave is the fact that he betrays his masters and reveals by what methods and means the world reactionaries have attempted and continue to attempt to turn the wheel of history backward.... And so Rajk has told of the stupendous conspiracy against the Hungarian Democratic Republic, the plan of which, following U.S. directives, was worked out by the Yugoslav agent of world imperialism. 4/

Rajk was found guilty and executed. On 26 March 1956, then Party Secretary Matyas Ruman admitted that Rajk's trial had been based on "provocation," and rehabilitated him posthumously.

On 9 December 1951, the Hungarian Government published a White Book, Documents on the Hostile Activity of the United States Government against the Hungarian People's Democracy, the preface of which stated: "This White Book shows world public opinion the hostile attitude of the United States Government toward the Hungarian people. This policy aiming to overthrow the freely elected democratic regime of the Hungarian people is closely linked with the preparations for a new war that the leaders of America are planning today." The text deals mainly with the alleged attempt of the United States to prevent "democratic" elections in Hungary, American "sabotage" and "espionage activities," complicity in the "conspiracy" of Rajk, Cardinal Mindszenty, etc. 5/

A Moscow broadcast to Hungary, commenting on the White Book, stated:

The U.S. Government is interfering crudely in the domestic affairs of the free Hungarian people. It is assisting saboteurs and spies in Hungary. No conspiratorial or spy trial in Hungary has been without its revelations of close connections between the accused and the U.S. Government or its agencies.

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The White Book issued by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry unmasked the U.S. Government's hostile activities. The U.S. is responsible for the Nagy, Hinszeghy, Rajk, and Great conspiracies against Hungary's independence and the People's Democratic system.

Imre Nagy is a friend of the leaders of the Anglo-American missions in Budapest. He wants to give the Americans Hungarian oil and airfields and wants to make Hungary into a U.S. Southeast European political and economic base.

Such are the plans of U.S. imperialists' accomplices, Zoltan Pfeiffer, Jozsef Hinszeghy, Laszlo Rajk, and others... 5/

c. Yugoslavia

Josip Broz Tito, and with him the Yugoslav People's Democracy, was read out of the Soviet Bloc by resolution of the Cominform in 1948, and the anti-Tito theme was promptly taken up by the satellites. The Czechoslovak Rude Pravo on 7 January 1950 stated that: "The Belgrade clique has inaugurated a complete sellout of Yugoslavia to the Western capitalists. Copying with the wish of Anglo-American imperialism they have turned Yugoslavia into a military base of the Wall Street aggressors." 7/ The following day Robotnickata Bala in Bulgaria carried a lead article entitled "The Titoite Clique, the Most Malicious Enemy of the Bulgarian People," which stated in part: "For our country, the Titoites are not only cowardly deserters from the camp of democracy and socialism, not only agents and spies of the Anglo-U.S. imperialists, the most malicious slanders and agents provocateur against the Soviet Union and the countries of People's Democracy, but also very dangerous neighbors." 8/ Purges in other satellites frequently indicted their victims for cooperation with Tito as well as with "Western imperialists."

d. Bulgaria

Traicho Kostov, Vice Premier and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, was expelled from the party in June 1949 for "conspiratorial

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activities" and failure to "submit to serious and sincere self-criticism of his errors." This action followed Kostov's commissary by Premier Kolarev for "an attitude of nationalism," which the party proclaimed "an imperialist weapon, a weapon which will be used against the peace front." In November of the same year Kostov was formally indicted on six counts, two of which contained charges relating to connections with "imperialists." 2/ The first charge:

The first defendant, Traicho Kostov, was attached to the police since 1942, later attached to the British espionage service, together with the defendant Nikola Savov whom he knew in the past as an agent of the police and the defendant Ivan Starfikov, secret collaborator and British spy whom he knew had taken part on September 9, 1944 in organizing a plot which aimed at overthrowing the existing democratic State regime in Bulgaria.

The fourth charge:

The defendant Traicho Kostov established with the consent of the British espionage service, secret and criminal relations with the Yugoslav leaders; with Mardjuk toward the end of 1944, with Djilas at the beginning of 1945, and with Anticovic and Tite in 1945-1947, and came to an agreement with them with a view to organizing concerted activity to deprive Bulgaria of her national sovereignty, her territorial integrity, and her independence by being annexed to Yugoslavia and above all to detaching the Pirin region and to annex it to Yugoslav Macedonia.

On 16 December 1949, Premier Kolarev told the Bulgarian populace that the Kostov trial had wrecked Anglo-American plans to "enslave" the Balkans. 19/

e. Czechoslovakia

One of the biggest of the satellite purge trials took place in Czechoslovakia in 1950, when fourteen prominent Communists, headed by former Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Rudolf Slansky, were

brought to trial on a wide variety of charges, including, inevitably, the standard accusation of conspiracy with the West. An editorial report of the trial over Prague radio stated:

They [the accused] are, above all, so dangerous because the entire center of plotters, with its sabotage, espionage and treasonable activities, is closely linked with the intensified war preparations of the U.S. imperialists, and it has aided the crusade of the imperialists against world peace.... At the head of all these hostile elements the imperialists placed Rudolf Slansky, who has been unmasked in this trial as an inveterate agent of the bourgeoisie and as a vile enemy of the people. By order of the American imperialists, Slansky gathered around him this whole gang and became its chieftain. Rudolf Slansky is the creator and head of this conspiratorial center. //

Attempting to strengthen the impact of the charges with the cumulative effect of purges in other countries, the Czech report continued:

The Cominform resolutions of 1948 and 1949 fully revealed the betrayal of the Tito clique in Yugoslavia. The case of Yugoslavia has shown in every respect how dangerous this banding of the imperialists is. The Cominform resolution has shown that the bourgeoisie continued its long established practice of recruiting spies and provocateurs within the party of the working class.

By these methods the imperialists endeavored to disrupt the Party from inside. They attempted to use the same methods as they did in the case of Tito's Yugoslavia. The Titoite clique, which, according to the imperialist plans, was to cover the left flank in case of an attack against the USSR, was in time unmasked, thanks to the historical experiences of the Soviet Communist Party.

However, the cunning imperialist plans were not confined to Yugoslavia. In other countries, too, which had been liberated by the victorious Soviet Forces, the imperialists instructed their agents to recruit spies, informers and traitors inside the Communist Parties.

Thanks to the vigilance of the working population and the Communist parties, the treacherous gangs of Rajk, Nagy, and others were in time unmasked. All these traitors were to turn their countries into imperialist military bases in case of war against the USSR.

The trials of these fascist agents proved that the imperialists began laying their plans against the Soviet Union at the very beginning of the Second World War. ¹²

f. Russia

In 1952, three important Hungarian Communists were purged by removal from their government jobs. Chief of these was Ann Farkas, who was arrested on charges of both rightist and leftist deviation, but never brought to trial. Uniquely, her indictment contained no charge of collaboration with the Nazis.

However, the Russians have joined the cry of "Anglo-American imperialism" threatening the People's Democracies. A Bucharest report on 3 December 1949 stated in part:

Sputnik, the central organ of the Russian Workers' Party, points to the fact that the trial of Nagy completes the picture of the Rajk trial, both of which disclose how Tito tried to split the People's Democracies from the peace front led by the Soviet Union and to draw them into the anti-Soviet bloc led by the United States of America, to transform them into colonies of American and British imperialism. Sputnik analyzes the details revealed in the indictment and emphasizes ... the scope of the criminal anti-Soviet plans elaborated by ... the Anglo-American imperialists ... Criminal plots aiming to undermine the People's Democracies from within are part of the preparations made by the Anglo-American imperialists and their servitor, Tito, for a new war. ¹³

g. East Germany

East Germany has been less subject to purges than most of the satellites. However, one veteran Communist Party leader, Franz Dahler, was expelled from the Politbüro

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and Central Committee on 14 May 1953 for "political blindness towards imperialist agents and refusing to admit his failings." On 17 July 1956, Dahlem was awarded a high Communist medal, the Hans-Beimler Medal awarded to leading German members of the International Brigade during the Spanish civil war, and fully rehabilitated as a "proven fighter against fascism."¹⁴

b. USSR

The arrest of Lavrenti Beria in June 1953, in the wake of Soviet reorganization after Stalin's death, is the single recent instance in the Soviet Union which employed the espionage charge. Among the sensational indictments against Beria was the standard charge that "... Beria, using his position, had knocked together a treacherous group of plottors hostile to the Soviet State which had made it its criminal aim to use organs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs ... against the Communist Party and Government of the USSR in the interests of foreign capital.... As has now been established by the investigation, Beria had established links with foreign intelligence services as far back as the civil war."¹⁵ The indictment then catalogued Beria's purported activities in behalf of British intelligence.

2. Civil Demonstrations and Riots

The pressures and tensions which exist within Communist society have erupted from time to time in civil disturbances. Again in these incidents the Soviets and their satellites employ the face-saving device of blaming Western intervention. There has been little publicity on any insurrections which may have occurred within the Soviet Union in recent years. A notable exception is the rioting in Georgia, particularly among the university students at Tiflis. This disturbance was given fairly wide coverage, but no attempt was made to associate it with western agents or influence. However, several large-scale insurrections in the satellites have been charged to "capitalist interference."

a. East Berlin, June 1953

The now-famous riots in East Berlin on 17 June 1953 gave the Communists an opportunity to cry out "intervention."

The disturbance appears to have arisen from worker dissatisfaction with work norms, particularly in the building industry. Berlin reported:

On June 16 differences arose among some of the workers on three building sites in Berlin in connection with the incorrect conduct of the building administration regarding the question of the higher norms which were decreed. These differences were of a local nature and affected only the building sites concerned. Provocateurs sent from West Berlin, however, appeared among the building workers and tried to distort the fact and to organize mass action by the workers. These attempts, however, did not result in any success worth mentioning. 15

On 17 June the East German government issued the following statement:

Measures taken by the Government of the GDR for the improvement of the situation of the population were answered by fascists and other reactionary elements in West Berlin with provocations and grave disturbances in the democratic sector of Berlin.

These provocations will make the establishment of the unity of Germany more difficult. The reason for the building workers of Berlin stopping work has ceased to exist as a result of yesterday's decision on the problem of norms.

The riots which occurred afterwards are the work of provocateurs and fascist agents of foreign powers and their aides and abettors from German capitalist monopolies. These forces are dissatisfied with the democratic powers in the GDR which are organizing an improvement in the situation of the population..."

It has been established that the strikes which took place yesterday in a number of enterprises as well as the provocative actions of some groups of fascist agents in the streets of the democratic sector of Berlin were carried out after a uniform plan drawn up in Western Berlin which was to be put into operation at a certain, suitable moment. 17

As a result of the riots, the increased work norms were rescinded by the SEP Politburo, lending credence to the opinion that the riot was based on legitimate economic grievances.

b. Poznan, June 1956

Worker grievances in Poznan reached such a pitch in June 1956 that a delegation of workers was sent to Warsaw to seek concessions from the government. What actually transpired in Warsaw is not clear. The Polish government declares that it decided, on the basis of the delegation's plea, to rectify some of the "mistakes in application" of regulations. Other reports indicate that the government did not satisfy the workers' demands. What is clear is that the Poznan workers were sufficiently dissatisfied that on 28 June they began rioting.

The Soviet Union has definitely charged western, particularly U.S., intervention in the Poznan riot. TASS reported on 29 June:

Warsaw--Today all Polish newspapers published official reports on the hostile provocation in Poznan committed by imperialist agents. The report says: "On 28 June there were disorders in Poznan. For a certain time imperialist agents and the reactionary underground attempted to exploit the economic difficulties and shortages in Poznan enterprises for provoking an action against the people's authority.... On June 28 the agents of the enemy succeeded in provoking street disorders. This led to an attack on some of the public buildings and resulted in some loss of human life...." 13

The 30 June resolution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union linked the Poznan riot to U.S. Senate appropriations:

Now, when the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries are doing everything possible to reduce international tension, the adherents of the "cold war" are trying to activate the "cold war," which is condemned by the peoples of the whole world.

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This is shown by the decision of the American Senate on an additional appropriation of \$25,000,000 for subversive activity, which is technically being called an "encouragement of freedom beyond the Iron Curtain."

We must soberly appraise this fact and draw relevant deductions from it. It is clear, for instance, that the anti-people's demonstrations in Poznan were paid for by the powers. However, the provocateurs and the disseminators, who were paid from the overseas funds, had only enough courage for a few hours.

On July 1 Moscow Radio accused "enemy agents, diversionists and plotters" of attempting to overthrow Poland's Communist regime. 1/ Frydka, on 5 July, stated:

It is clear to everybody that the American propaganda rumpus over the cult of the individual and the American stage-managed provocation in Poland (the Poznan rioting) have one aim ... that is to try to prevent the relaxation of international tension, indispensable for American munition monopolies to keep walking fat on the arms race. 2/

Polish accusations have, on the whole, been much more equivocal than the charges emanating from Moscow. Premier Gromkiewicz on 29 June acknowledged the workers' legitimate grievances:

In regard to grievances remedied in a number of enterprises in Poznan, which to a large extent have been caused by mistakes in application of the regulations in force, it is obvious that those mistakes must be and will be made good immediately, especially since a decision to make good these mistakes was made by the Party and the Government several days ago when a delegation of workers was received by representatives of the Government and their main demands were positively settled.

This did not prevent the provocateurs from organizing yesterday's demonstrations, which they had been preparing for a long time with the help of alien organizers. Imperialist centers concentrated

their entire attention on Poznan because they wanted Poznan, the place of the international fair, to be made a center of riots during the fair.... They wanted to create anarchy, which would stand in the way of the processes of the democratization of our life. This is what the imperialist agents wanted most of all. 21/

He did not identify the "alien organizers" and "imperialist agents" as being definitely Western.

Ronald Spasowski, Polish Ambassador to Washington, delivered to the State Department a protest over what he termed "interference in Polish internal affairs," stating that his government objected to an expression by a State Department officer of U.S. "profound shock" at shootings during the riots. The Ambassador conceded that "to a certain extent" food shortages had been behind the Poznan uprising. He insisted that the riots had begun as peaceful demonstrations and that it had been only after "subversive elements" had become involved that the "shooting started." In response to a question, Spasowski agreed that the "subversive elements" were Poles. 22/

The Yugoslav paper Vesna je Novosti in an editorial on the Poznan riot put the blame largely on "Stalinist elements," but stated: "It was to be expected that the reactionaries, in fact counterrevolutionary elements, probably aided from the outside, would try to exploit the process of de-Stalinization." 23/

3. Agricultural Failures

The USSR has been able to find internal scapegoats for its agricultural failures (e.g., Georgi Malenkov). The satellites, however, have had to find outside sources to blame. One type of such accusations has been recurrent reports of "bugs" and "garmes" which Western agents supposedly have infiltrated into Soviet Bloc fields and farms. In addition to explaining their inability to check pests and plant diseases, this charge fits well into the Communist theme of bacteriological warfare. In 1952 under a headline "Today Potato Bugs, Tomorrow Plague Bacilli," ADN, the official East German news agency, reported that "a twin-engined United States jet plane... dropped a boxful of insects on an East German field." 24/

In the same vein, the Czechoslovak paper Rude Pravo, writing on a trial of kulaks and former capitalists, described the confession of one kulak who admitted having received a phial of germs from the agents of a Western source and having spread them in the feeding trough of the animals belonging to various penitentiaries. The kulak is reported to have confessed: "They promised us that we could damage the regime ... and achieve its overthrow with the help of the Western imperialists." 14/

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